

# North Chicago VA News



North Chicago  
VA Medical Center  
3001 Green Bay Road  
North Chicago, Illinois 60064

January 2004

## All Employee Holiday Party

Employees were treated to hors d'oeuvres, cookies and sodas, and the chance to win over 30 raffle prizes, while enjoying holiday music and atmosphere in the newly remodeled 134-1C. All staff were entered into the raffle.



The Canteen provided the scrumptious food, which included Swedish and Italian meatballs, cheese, meat and cracker trays, pizza bread, and delicious confectionaries, which satisfied everyone's appetite! These were made possible from funds made through purchases in the Canteen.

Staff that worked third shift, and the staff at the Community Based Outpatient Clinics were provided special holiday treats as well.

Thanks to everyone who made this holiday event successful, and to the Canteen for the great food! Wishing you all a very happy, healthy and prosperous new year!

## Diversity Day 2003: Holidays Around The World

Many unique cultures make up our workforce at the North Chicago VAMC. On Friday, Dec. 5 our staff came together to share, educate and bring awareness of these cultures at the "Holidays Around the World" celebration. If you were there, you know the excitement and sounds that filled the air, not to mention the aroma of ethnic foods which was one of the highlights of the program.

Twelve groups participated this year including: Native American, Scandinavian, Philippines, Hispanic, Italian, Polish, Scottish, Chinese, Indian, Jewish, Korean, and African-American. As the event began, the sound of Scottish bagpipes echoed throughout Building 4. Entertainment was outstanding. Mr. Tony Mattia, in authentic American Indian dress, performed several spiritual dances. Ms. Shital Gandhi, also dressed in her ethnic finery, entertained with Indian dance. Ms. Jeanine Wu sang Chinese ballets, and music was provided by Polish violinist, Ms. Kimberly Johnson.



Employees who purchased a ticket were treated to an abundance of delicious "taste samples" of food from around the world. All are encouraged to begin planning now to participate in the 2004 Diversity Day Celebration. Questions may be directed to Sarah Fouse at ext. 85757 or Nancy Gember at ext. 83853.



## North Chicago News

North Chicago News is published for staff and volunteers of the North Chicago VA Medical Center. Submissions can be sent to [douglas.shouse@med.va.gov](mailto:douglas.shouse@med.va.gov) Contributors for this issue:

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## Spectacular Remodeling For Adult Day Health Care Unit in Building 134-1C

On December 17th, 2003 North Chicago employees attended the ribbon cutting for the new Adult Day Care Center (ADHC) which has been relocated to building 134-1C. Visitors were able to appreciate the design elegance of the new area. While partaking in the ambiance of the newly decorated area an appreciation was noted as to the functionality and multipurpose aspects of the different areas of the program. ADHC moved from the basement of building 126, where it had been located for 20 + years, which was not only away from the



mainstream of the campus, but was in need of renovation to support the program. The new area provides an esthetic, therapeutic and safe environment for the veterans served by the program and for the staff that support the program.



# Strategic Planning Activities - Looking Back and Moving Forward

On December 3 and 4, 2003, the Annual NCVAMC Strategic Planning Conference was held at Illinois Beach Conference Center. NCVAMC's leadership team was joined by our product line leaders, program chiefs, INA rep, AFGE rep, and many staff from all business units. Also in attendance was Dr. Dale Gerding, ACOS/Research and Development, our Veterans Assistance Commissioners, Johnny Allen, Lake County and Mike Iwanicki, McHenry County as well as Captain Anderson, Commanding Officer and Commander Zinder, Chief Surgical Services, Great Lakes Naval Hospital.

The two day meeting began with data presentations focusing on North Chicago VA's accomplishments as well as areas where opportunities for improvements exist.

## LOOKING BACK

During FY03, we focused on four Strategic Initiatives:

### 1. CLINIC WAITING TIMES:

Leader, Dr. Frank Maldonado

#### Project Teams:

•**Improve Referrals** - Kathy Dong (Leader), Dr. Lorraine Roth, Kathy Mega, Janet Lederman, Randy Gartner, Lolita Shelton.

•**Data Tracking** - Jill Hendrickson (Leader), Sharon Jerome, Jackie

## NEWSBITS

\*Three nurses receive their Bachelor of Science in Nursing:  
Rosie Elder,  
Head Nurse, 131-2AN

Lonnie Martin,  
Staff Nurse, 131-2A

Donna Michalowski,  
Head Nurse, 131-4C

\*CFC Campaign - North Chicago surpassed its \$20,000 goal by over \$10,000 for a grand total \$30,277 contributed by North Chicago VA employees. Congratulations to Co-Chairpersons:

Robin Mendel-Rosenberg  
Jill Feldman, Ph.D.

\*Congratulations to Dr. Janet Lederman and Dr. Carrie Sincak (formerly Quigley) of Pharmacy/SPD whose article "Possible Gatifloxacin-Induced Seizure" has been published in the December 15 issue of "The Annals of Pharmacotherapy". You can read the article online at <http://www.theannals.com/cgi/content/abstract/aph.1D349v1>.



Lourdes Gube, FMS, worked with Debbie Safron, NP, and her project team to improve clinic signage in all ambulatory care areas. Team members from left: Joni Dworak, Jan Tiojanco, Janice Miller, Lourdes Gube, Olivia Presley and (inset) Debbie Safron (Team Leader).

Peterson, Randy Gartner.

•**Allocating Resources** - Pam Thomson (Leader), Jan Wilson, Willie Labonne, Carol Dokko, Pat Lewis, Hazelle Cromartie, Jill Hendrickson, Ervin Shaw, Evelyn Crenshaw, Denise Lear, Kay Willis, Jan Macintyre, Ann Juska.

•**Advanced Clinic Access** - Dr. Maldonado (Leader), Patricia Manning, Celeste Bautista.

\*\* Prior to the Clinic Waiting Time Initiative implementation, NCVAMC had approximately 1,400 patients on a waiting list for primary care appointments. In a period of 10 months, this list was completely eliminated.

### 2. PROGRAM ANALYSIS/COST ANALYSIS: Leader, Valerie Pettigrew

#### Project Teams:

•**Administrative Program Costs** - Valerie Pettigrew (Leader), Josephine Lay, Brad Nystrom, Chuck Loring, Barb Lavin, Jill Hendrickson.

•**Clinical Program Cost** - Valerie Pettigrew (Leader), Randy Gartner, Randy Pettigrew, Dave Barton, Jill Hendrickson, Michelle Tanner, Mary Lange-Alberts, Greg Gola, Terry Martin, Doug Shouse.

\*\* Measures were developed to determine administrative productivity and have been working on identifying ways to track patient care costs for improved efficiencies.

### 3. COORDINATION OF PATIENT CARE: Leader, Dr. Eddie Williams

#### Project Teams:

•**Bridging Geographic Delivery of Care** - Debbie Safron (Leader), Olivia Presley, Joni Dworak, Jane Tiojanco, Janice Miller, Bernice Arcibal.

•**Coordination of Information** - Ervin Shaw (Leader), Doug Moore, Carol Dokko, Sandra Wyman, Linda Dowell, Betty Aguirre, Dr. Shelia Maliekal, John Rinkema, Patricia Lewis.

•**Drivers to Integration of Care** - Sonia Fulambarker (Leader), Karen Brodlo, Julianne Hish, Dr. Sheila Maliekal, Florence Marquis, Pamela Thomson.

\*\* Team Members analyzed the current patient flow process through the Ambulatory care clinic, and facilitated improvements in the

process of loved ones viewing deceased patients. They are working to streamline the communication of co-managed clinic patient's medical documents between non-providers and the patient's VA providers.

### 4. ENHANCE VA/DOD

**SHARING:** Leader, Dr. Frank Maldonado

#### Project Teams:

•**Administrative Group:** Jill Hendrickson (Leader), Marsha Nielsen, Valerie Pettigrew, Kris Counts, Terry Martin, Evelyn Crenshaw.

•**Clinical Group:** Dr. Frank Maldonado, (Leader), Jill Hendrickson, Kathy Mega, Susanne Mills, Michael Willis, Dr. Irving Garlovsky, Sharon Pusateri, Karen Carstens.

\*\* Team members worked with staff at the Great Lakes Naval Hospital to identify patient care services that can be shared. An example is the Acute Psychiatry inpatient services NCVAMC is now providing to active duty Navy patients.

## THANK YOU, THANK YOU

A special thanks goes out to each one of the employees who joined one of the FY03 Strategic Initiative Teams. Each employee brought their own unique expertise and shared their ideas in improving NCVA services.

## MOVING FORWARD

The major task accomplished at the completion of our Dec. 3 and 4 Strategic Planning Conference was the selection of the 4 Strategic Planning Initiatives that will be focused on in FY04. They are listed below:

- Maintain Patient Health**
- Improve Customer Satisfaction**
- Enhance VA/DOD Sharing Opportunities**
- Improve Resource Management**

The membership for these teams is currently being formulated. If you would like to become involved, please contact Ms. Peggy Beyer, Chief, Outreach/Facility Planning at ext. 81247.



## Exceptional Customer Service Stories

**Story 1:** We received a story from a veteran/employee relating to Lee Parker, the Chief of Veteran's Rehabilitation Unit. The story goes like this: Lee Parker has worked with this veteran for approximately 4-1/2 months and wants to let everyone know that he is always professional. "Lee gives me the "skinny" flat out and never sugar coats his talk" which this veteran truly appreciates. By Lee's directness, this veteran feels respected. This veteran states "There is not one day to specify on his professionalism, he is always there for me." Great job Lee for exceeding this veteran's emotional needs. Keep it up!

**Story 2:** Debi Safron is this veterans Primary Care Nurse Practitioner and states that "Debi has given this veteran nothing but the very best service. She takes the time to listen to me. Debi does what has to be done and always follows through. I could not say anything but the best of Debi Safron. She is awesome. Debi Safron has given superlative service EVERY time I have seen her." This is one of several letters we've received on Debi's customer service. Keep up the great job because you are a positive reflection on VA North Chicago.

**Story 3:** We received this letter on Shirlisa Sanders who is currently

working in OPI. This letter is from Joyce Webber who wanted to relay that "Shirlisa has always been kind and informative. She taught me the job I do now. Shirlisa was working in the Veterans Rehabilitation Unit (VRU) when I came here several months ago. She was always nice. She instructed me in my position, never condescending to me. I truly appreciate her directness. It made me feel respected." Customer service does not just relate to our external customers (the veterans/family members) but also is our coworkers. Nice job Shirlisa. Great customer service to an internal customer.

**Story 4:** This letter was received from a veteran/employee who wanted to recognize exceptional customer service from our healthcare providers, Dr. Garlovsky and Dr Hsieh. The letter reads "Dr. Garlovsky and Dr Hsieh always give their best to me each time I see them. I was really frightened when I first came to the North Chicago Veteran Affairs Medical Center because I had truly wonderful doctors at my civilian hospital (Northwest Community Healthcare) but even so, these two doctors made me less frightened. They are very professional and both give good service every time I see them. I have had two cystoscopies

done by Dr. Garlovsky and I can say that he did his very best not to cause me pain." This is the type of service that needs to be provided by each of us daily. Thank you Dr. Garlovsky and Dr. Hsieh for your exceptional customer service by making this patient comfortable, meeting the veteran's emotional needs and providing exceptional service.

**Story 5:** This letter was received from a veteran/employee who wanted to bring to the attention of our facility an exceptional social worker, Dr. Feldman. It reads: "Dr. Feldman has opened my mind in a way no other social worker has. She has given me ways to control my anxiety attacks. She has helped me through several traumatic episodes and she is also extremely thorough. She has been the teacher in a couple of classes I have attended which also helped me control my emotions and my despair. Dr. Feldman is a most professional person (as are all of my doctors). She is superlative." What a great example of realizing the needs of a patient as well as ensuring their emotional needs are met. Fabulous job.

**Story 6:** Received this letter on Dr Jost a neurologist at North Chicago VA from a very satisfied customer. The letter stated "Dr. Jost is my neurologist. She is superlative every time I see her. There is no other words to describe her. She takes the time necessary to be complete every time I see her. She goes out of her way to make sure I have what I need, for example the little cups with which to measure Depakane. She hunted until she found them. This is way beyond duty, but she did not think so. Also, when I broke my foot, she made sure I didn't walk to the front of Building 133 to wait for my bus, she instead had someone wheel me out to the front of Building 133. Dr. Jost is just the most caring and attentive doctor I could have. What an awesome individual." This is another fine example of ensuring quality care which exceeded the customers expectation. Nice job.

## Chaplain Hutchinson Honored By VA National Black Chaplains Association



Chaplain Randall Hutchinson was the recipient of the "Pioneer's Award" in Atlanta this past fall, honoring him for his trail blazing efforts in serving the VA National Black Chaplains Association.

Randall Hutchinson received his Bachelor of Theology and Bachelor of Arts Degree from Simmons University in Kentucky. He received his Master of Divinity and Doctoral of Ministry from Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky.

Chaplain Hutchinson enlisted in the United States Army Paratroopers in July 1953. He was honorably discharged having attained the rank of Staff Sergeant in 1956.

Chaplain Hutchinson began his VA career in 1977 as staff chaplain in Oklahoma City. In August, 1982, he was appointed Chief, Chaplain Service at North Chicago VA. During his tenure at NCVA, Chaplain Hutchinson also served as Chairperson of the EEO Advisory Committee and was twice nominated for Federal Employee of the Year in the Supervisor category and selected as a finalist in 1992. In 1996, he was awarded "Hospital Chaplain of the Year" from the Progressive National Baptist Convention and the "Outstanding Service Award" as President of the VA National Black Chaplain Association. He received the "National Distinguished Service Award" from the Military Chaplain Association of the USA. In September 2000, Chaplain Hutchinson received the Department of Veterans Affairs "Secretary's Award for "Excellence in Chaplaincy".

Chaplain Hutchinson is a member of the Greater Faith Baptist Church of Waukegan. He is married to the former Wynona Pearl Wilson. They have seven children and fourteen grandchildren



Karen Bragg of Counterpart International, a non-profit international human development organization, presented appreciation certificates to George Jimenez, FMS and Kathleen Ladewig, SPD(not picture) for their work in donating excess government property. From left: Mr. Sullivan, Medical Center Director; Daryl Holst, Chief, FMS; Dennis Lamb, Gerry Knigge, Steve Navarro, George(Joe) Jimenez all of FMS and Karen Bragg.



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## Volunteers Bring Holiday Cheer To Our Veterans!



time visiting with hospitalized veterans singing Christmas songs, giving out gift boxes and letting the men and women who served this country know that they are not forgotten. It is a small way to say thank you.



Operation Christmas Cheer provided over \$50,000.00 worth of gifts to 410 veterans at NCVA. The day before the event fifty VFW and Auxiliary members volunteered four hours to put together all of the gift boxes. Each box contained over thirty items including T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, phonecards, canteen books, and lots of snacks. The Lake County Queens (pictured above) have also participated in this activity for many years. These young ladies add a lot of energy and enthusiasm as they help sing the carols and pose for pictures with the vets. This year 21 young ladies participated.

There were gift distributions to all of the wards which included candy, cookies, baseball caps, T-shirts, phone cards, and canteen books. The annual VAVS Patient Holiday Parties featured a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Santa (pictured) and entertainment by the kids from the SDA Christian School of Lake County, the Lake Bluff Middle School (pictured), and the veterans

from the Building 46 choir.

\*\*\*\*\*

The American Legion Auxillary did their annual Gift Shop where the veterans are allowed to choose presents to send to their family members. United Airlines and the JROTC not only decorated the trees on each ward, but they also sponsored a party with a band and lots of treats.

\*\*\*\*\*

For the second year in a row, Motorola employees (pictured below) asked every veteran in our Bldg. 134 and 133 Nursing Home for 3 things that they would like to have and then an employee from Motorola picked a name and bought those items. They also came and passed out all of the individual gifts.

\*\*\*\*\*

Special thanks to the American Legion for donating a DVD player for every ward (pictured at left).

\*\*\*\*\*

Again through the "Snowflake Express III", the North Chicago VA employees showed they could help make holiday wishes come true for children of three specially selected veteran's families. By asking each employee to place just one dollar in an envelope, we raised over \$300.00. This money went for gift cards from Target. The families were very touched and sincerely grateful. They wish to thank all who contributed.

Thanks to all who made our veterans holiday a little brighter.

The month of December always has a wide variety of holiday activities for our veterans sponsored by the various volunteer organizations and the 2003 Holiday Season offered a record number of enjoyable activities which included caroling, tree decorating, catered parties and dinners here at the VA and several holiday dinners for our veterans in the community.

\*\*\*\*\*

Operation Christmas Cheer celebrated 36 years of providing holiday programs for our veterans. Operation Christmas Cheer is sponsored by the 5th District VFW and Auxiliary and it was initiated by Mr. Don Librande, who was the Chairman for the first 25 years. Mr. Ken Hauser, who is the Chaplain for the 5th District VFW, has been the Chairman for the past 11 years. Mr. Hauser says that their purpose is to spend some quality

